

# Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Health and Wellbeing Board (Shadow)
MEETING DATE:	7 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
TITLE:	Children's Safeguarding Report
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>	
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b>	
Appendix 1: Safeguarding Children Performance Indicators	

## 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To provide the Board with a progress report in respect of the key indicators of safeguarding children activity, as reported in the Annual Report and Business Plan of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and monitored by the business meetings of the LSCB. This includes a combination of national performance indicators and locally determined indicators. The latter, which are being collated for the first time, will provide more evidence of the quality and impact of child protection services for the child and their family, to supplement the national performance indicators which are fundamentally output measures.
- 1.2 Progress is shown in relation to previous years and in comparison with other Local Authorities and is reported at the end of each quarter. This report details the position at the end second quarter of 2012/13.

## 2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing is asked to note the report and actions being taken and receive updated performance reports at each meeting of the Board.

## 3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial considerations arising from this report.

## 4 THE REPORT

- 4.1 Appendix 1 details Bath and North East Somerset's performance in respect of the national performance indicators for safeguarding children activity, as reported to the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and our first reports in respect of locally determined indicators. The following paragraphs provide a commentary and performance summary in respect of each indicator, together with corrective actions where appropriate. Proposals for further local performance indicators and how these will be collected and recorded are outlined in paragraph 4.12.

## **4.2 Number of children subject to child protection plans**

- 4.2.1 This is not a national performance indicator, but a significant indicator of child protection activity, though it should be interpreted with caution. A child protection plan is made following a multi-agency case conference and assessment that a child is at continuing risk of significant harm or impairment of health and development. Early intervention and the provision of services can result in a child's needs to being met any earlier stage, thereby preventing the escalation to risk of significant harm and the need for a child protection plan – resulting in a smaller number/percentage of children with plans. On the other hand, small numbers could be the result of inappropriately high thresholds for intervention.
- 4.2.2 Our thresholds for intervention are monitored by the LSCB's Safeguarding Children Sub Committee and reported to the LSCB. The Children's Service regularly audits thresholds for interventions. These are considered to be appropriately and consistently set and understood by other agencies.
- 4.2.3 As reported previously to the Board, there was a spike in numbers in 2010/11 (106) which was investigated by the Children's Service and reported to the LSCB. Subsequent to this, actions were taken to address the factors which have resulted in an appropriate reduction in the number of children with protection plans throughout 2011/12 and more children in need plans – whilst ensuring that protection plans are in place for all who require them. The numbers returned to the average for the previous 5 years and currently stands at 80.
- 4.2.4 Whilst it is likely that the figure for 2010/11 represented a spike within overall figures, it is probable that the current figure will steadily increase over the next few years in line with the recent trends and projected increases in the demands for Children's Social Care Service, and the number of initial and core assessments undertaken, and will probably reach 100 – 105 by 2014/15. These trends and projections are in line with comparator authority and national positions.

## **4.3 Child Protection Plans lasting two years or more (NI 64)**

- 4.3.1 This national performance indicator is used to indicate the effectiveness of the child protection plan in eliminating and significantly reducing the risk of significant harm – and is based upon research evidence that this is most likely to be achieved within a two year period. If not, the Local Authority should consider whether action is required to remove children from care in which they are assessed as being a continuing risk of significant harm. There are circumstances in which plans may exceed 2 years – for example when there have been changes in household composition that required further assessments: when addressing issues of neglect and improvements in parenting are being effected but further improvements are required and the assessment is that these can be achieved; when working with parents whose mental health and/or learning difficulties impact upon their parenting.
- 4.3.2 The Children's Service Integrated Safeguarding Officer has completed an extensive audit of all cases where plans have exceeded 2 years and presented a report to the LSCB and the Children's Leadership Team. The audit has highlighted areas for improvement including greater clarity about risk factors, more robust reviewing arrangements (via core group meetings

and case conference), more focussed work by all agencies working with families. A progress report will be presented to the LSCB in December 2012.

- 4.3.3 In order to effect improvements, the Children's Service has introduced new arrangements whereby parents will be seen at home by the Independent Chair prior and subsequent to the initial conference, to ensure clear understanding of the purpose of the conference and the risk factors, protective factors and protection plan detailed at the conference. This will provide a clear starting point for the work with the child/young person and parents and will assist better reviews of progress and decisions about the need for continuing child protection plans. This action has been supplemented by actions to improve the written reports submitted by all agencies and the work of the core group. In combination these should reduce the number of plans lasting 2 years or more, and the need for repeat plans (see below).
- 4.3.4 For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.
- 4.3.5 The improvement noted throughout 2010/11 (which resulted in the end of year figure being only slightly off target), was maintained in 2011/12 and the end of year target achieved. It must be noted that these percentages represent a small number of children and families. Target was met for first quarter but not for second. The end of year target should be achieved. We have processes in place to review the circumstances of each child. Each child protection plan is reviewed by a multi-agency case conference, and the decision to continue with child protection plans quality assured by the LSCB's Safeguarding Children Sub Committee.

#### **4.4 Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time (NI 65)**

- 4.4.1 This national indicator is used to measure the effectiveness of child protection plans in eliminating risks of significant harm – i.e. the risks have been eliminated, do not reappear and necessitate a further child protection plan. In practice, this is determined by the quality of services provided and work undertaken with parents and child(ren) through the plan: the quality of assessment of risks of significant harm and actions taken: the provision and accessibility of any support services subsequent to the child protection plan.
- 4.4.2 For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.
- 4.4.3 As has previously been reported, our performance in this area had been strong for a number of years – exceeding both the national and family of Local Authorities' performance – but was off target in 2011/12 (and above national and comparator positions) and whilst gradual improvements were achieved throughout 2011/12 the end of year target was not achieved.
- 4.4.4 Performance during the first two quarters of 2012/13 has slipped below target as this period saw an increase in the need for repeat plans (including for some large sibling groups) which impacted upon performance. All repeat plans were made as the result of multi-agency child protection conference decisions and have been audited by the LSCB sub committee.

- 4.4.5 It should be noted that absolute numbers are small but it is important to continue to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the services provided by agencies at the conclusion of child protection plans to prevent risks from re-emerging. Ensuring that these are in place and consistently accessed by families is central to the re-design of Children's Social Care Service currently underway and has been reported to the LSCB. The actions outlined in paragraphs 4.3.3 should effect improvements in future.

#### **4.5 Child protection cases which were reviewed within timescales (NI 67)**

- 4.5.1 It is important that all child protection plans are reviewed (by multi agency case conferences) to ensure that they are being implemented and remain appropriate to a child's needs and assessed risk of significant harm. Also to determine whether any further actions are required. Child protection plans must be reviewed within 3 months of the initial case conference and within (at least) six monthly intervals thereafter.
- 4.5.2 For this performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.
- 4.5.3 Our performance is 100% and has been for the previous eight years. The reported performance for 2011/12 (98.5%) represented one case not being received within timescales. There was a child protection plan in place and this has been reviewed.
- 4.5.4 Although this indicator is no longer part of the National Indicator set for safeguarding, we will continue to monitor this area of performance given its importance in underpinning good and timely planning.

#### **4.6 Initial assessments by Children's Social Care carried out within ten working days of referral (NI 59) – (previously seven working days)**

- 4.6.1 Initial assessments are an important indicator of how quickly services can respond when a child is thought to be at risk of serious harm or thought to be a child in need. As the assessment involves a range of local agencies, this indicator also shows how well multi-agency arrangements are established. The child or young person must be seen, and their wishes and feelings taken into account, within the completion of the initial assessment.
- 4.6.2 For the performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.
- 4.6.3 As reported previously, the Service struggled to meet the target for this indicator throughout 2011/12 (despite a strong start) due to capacity issues in the front of house team as a consequence of staff turnover and vacancies (now resolved) at a time when the Service was dealing with a very significant increase in the number of referrals for services and consequently in the number of initial assessments required (as reported in the report to the Board on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012). These factors have continued to impact upon performance in 2012/13. The capacity issues have been addressed within the re-design of Children's Social Care Service, with an additional Deputy Team Manager and 2 Qualified Social Worker posts added to the staffing establishment. Improved arrangements for tracking progress with the completion of assessments and management sign off have been introduced, and a Performance Management Group (chaired by the Director of People

and Communities Department) meets fortnightly to monitor progress and provide additional direction and support. A week by week performance of 82.5% completion is required in order to meet the end of year target, and this has been achieved in recent weeks so that overall performance on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2012 has been raised to 70.5% (against end of year target of 75%).

- 4.6.4 The Service has always asserted the importance of seeing the child/young person as part of the initial assessment, and has therefore introduced a local performance indicator showing how many were seen within 5 days of referral. All children/young people will be seen within 10 working days, so this indicator illustrates how quickly children are seen.
- 4.6.5 Whilst striving to complete initial assessments within 10 working days, the Service recognises the importance of assessments being completed within a timescale appropriate to the child's needs (and always incorporating their views) and this may exceed 10 working days. As a result, we have introduced a local indicator to report the completion of assessments within 15 working days. This is reported for the first time. The capacity issues outlined above have impacted upon this, but a significant step towards achieving the end of year target was made in the second quarter.

#### **4.7 Core assessments by Children's Social Care Services that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement (NI 60)**

- 4.7.1 Core assessments are an in depth assessment of a child and their family, as defined in the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. There are also the means by which section 47 (child protection) enquiries are undertaken following a strategy discussion. It is important that the Council investigates and addresses concerns in a timely and efficient way, and that those in receipt of an assessment have a clear idea of how quickly this should be completed. Successful meeting of the timescales can also indicate effective joint working where multi-agency assessment is required.
- 4.7.2 For this performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.
- 4.7.3 As reported previously, the Service struggled to meet the target for this indicator throughout 2011/12 due to capacity issues in the front of house team as a consequence of staff turnover and vacancies (now resolved) at a time when the very significant increase in referrals and initial assessments was necessitating a similarly significant increase in core assessments (a 50% increase in this workload during a 3 year period). These factors have continued to impact upon performance into 2012/13. The actions detailed in paragraph 4.6.3 have been applied to effect improvements in the completion of core assessments. A week by week performance of 94% is required to achieve the end of year target.
- 4.7.4 Whilst striving to complete core assessments within 35 working days, the Service recognises the importance of assessments being completed within a timescale appropriate to the child's needs (and always incorporating their views) and this may exceed 35 working days. As a result, we have introduced a local indicator to report the completion of assessments within 45 working days. This is reported for the first time. The capacity issues outlined

above have impacted upon this, but a significant step towards achieving the end of year target was made in the second quarter.

#### **4.8 Percentage of closed cases resulting in repeat referrals within 6 months (Local)**

- 4.8.1 The Children's Social Care Service has introduced a local indicator designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of its specialist services in meeting the needs of the child/young person **and** ensuring that at the conclusion of these services appropriate support is being provided by other services/agencies (if required) to continue to meet these needs, thereby avoiding repeat referrals to Children's Social Care. This absence of a repeat referral should be indicative of improvements having been sustained. This is being reported for the first time and the target set will need to be kept under review as it may require some refinement. It must be noted that despite the success of services at one time, a child's circumstances may require a repeat referral.
- 4.8.2 For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.
- 4.8.3 The first reported performance appears strong, but this must be considered over a much longer timeframe.

#### **4.9 Percentage of looked after children cases reviewed within required timescales (rolling 12 month programme – NI66: and in financial year to date – local indicator)**

- 4.9.1 When a child/young person is admitted to the Council's care, the Council is assuming responsibility for keeping him/her safe. The timely reviewing of the child's care plan and placement plan are essential elements of this. A planning meeting is held prior to or immediately following admission to care: reviews are held after 1 month, after 4 months, and at least 6 monthly thereafter throughout the time the child/young person is in care. Such reviews, linking with care proceedings as required, will make decisions about whether children should return to their family's care.
- 4.9.2 The calculation requires that all reviews (1 month, 4 month, subsequent 6 month) have been held on time for the child within the 12 month period.
- 4.9.3 For the performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.
- 4.9.4 Strong performance has been established for the rolling figure for the first two quarters 2012/13, and the performance reported for the financial year 2012-13 to date, is underpinning this strong performance.

#### **4.10 Stability of placements for looked after children: percentage who had 3 or more placements during the year (rolling 12 months) (NI62)**

- 4.10.1 One of the five measures within the Every Child Matters Staying Safe Outcome, is that 'Children and young people have stability, security and are cared for' – and a key indicator of performance is the stability of placements for these children and young people who are looked after by the Local Authority. Research evidence shows that looked after children who experience stable and secure care arrangements make better

progress in all areas and achieve better outcomes throughout their childhood, and into adult life.

4.10.2 For this performance indicator, a low score is indicative of good performance.

4.10.3 The Service has maintained very strong performance for a number of years, above the national and family authority performance, reflecting the sound arrangements for matching children with carers and the level of support (including tailored support) provided to carers and children. We have already set an ambitious target for this indicator. Although slightly off target for the second quarter, performance remains very strong.

#### **4.11 Stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement (NI63)**

4.11.1 For the reasons outlined in paragraph 4.10.1, this is an important indicator of performance in providing and sustaining stable and secure care arrangements. There is a relatively small number within this cohort of children at any time, so that small changes in absolute numbers can result in what appear to be significant changes in percentages.

4.11.2 For this performance indicator, a high score is indicative of good performance.

4.11.3 The Service has maintained strong performance for a number of years, above national and family authority averages, reflecting the sound arrangements for matching children with carers and the level of support provided (including a tailored support) to children and carers. Although slightly off target for the second quarter, performance remains strong.

4.12 As well as introducing the local performance indicators outlined above, the Service is also progressing plans to collate information which will provide qualitative measures of performance.

Any qualitative measures, to include:-

- Percentage of children reporting that the provision of social care services had made a positive difference to their lives / made them feel safer
- Percentage of parents reporting had made a positive difference to their parenting and their child safer
- Percentage of plans incorporating the child's expressed views and opinions

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

5.2 The risks associated with ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements are assessed and managed by the LSCB (which receives quarterly performance reports) and its constituent members. Within the Council, these issues are identified within the Service Risk Register.

## **6 EQUALITIES**

- 6.1 Promoting diversity and supporting individual identity and recognising and valuing the racial and cultural diversity of Bath and North East Somerset's communities and a commitment for anti-discriminatory practice are values underpinning the work of the LSCB.
- 6.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of the LSCB's Annual Report and Work Programme which incorporates these performance indicators.

## 7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Cabinet Member; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer.
- 7.2 Consultation with other BANES Services and other Public Sector Bodies via reports to and discussions at the Local Safeguarding Children Board quarterly meetings.
- 7.3 Discussed with staff at Team and Management Group meetings and via LSCB Stakeholders' event.

## 8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

- 8.1 Social Inclusion; Young People.

## 9 ADVICE SOUGHT

- 9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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<b>Background papers</b>	Previous reports to Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board: most recent 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2012.
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	

## Appendix 1: Safeguarding Children Performance Indicators (National and Local)

Safeguarding Children performance indicator/activity	2010/11 England	2010/11 Family	2010/11 BANES	2011/12 BANES	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Quarterly			
						Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1. Number of children subject to child protection plan			106	70	N/A	82	80		
2. Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more (NI 64)	6.0%	7.0%	10.4%	5.4%	8%	6.6%	10.6%		
3. Children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time (NI 65)	13.3%	15.0%	23.5%	14.9%	12%	19.0%	20.0%		
4. Child protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales (Local)	97.1%	96.9%	100%	98.5%	100%	100%	100%		
5. Initial assessments by Children's Social Care carried out within 10 working days (NI 61)	75.7%	68.2%	67.5%	71.2%	75%	47.2%	69.1%		
6. Percentage of children seen within 5 working days of referral (Local)	-	-	-	-	50%		57.1%		
7. Initial assessments completed within 15 working days (Local/New)	-	-	-	81.2%	95%	62.5%	79.5%		
8. Core assessments carried out by Children's Social Care carried out within 35 working days of their commencement (NI 60)	75.1%	68.9%	59.3%	67.5%	75%	40.7%	64.3%		
9. Core assessments completed within 45 working days	-	-	-	80.6%	95%	52.7%	75.0%		
10. Percentage of closed cases	-	-	-	34.2%	20%	34.8%	19.7%		

resulting in repeat referrals within 6 months									
11. Percentage of looked after children cases, in care for a year or more, which were reviewed within required timescales (rolling 12 months) (NI 66)	96.8%	88.8%	86%	79.7%	87%	84.4%	88.9%		
12. Percentage of all LAC reviews on time (financial year to date)	-	-	-	-	87%	97.9%	97.6%		
13. Stability of placements of looked after children: percentage who had 3 or more placements during the year (rolling 12 months) (NI 62)	10.9%	12.9%	5.6%	9.1%	9.0%	7.1%	9.3%		
14. Stability of placements of looked after children: length of placement (NI 63)	68.6%	69.4%	79.5%	72.7%	75%	76.2%	77.3%		

**Note:** This table details performance for 2010/11 and comparisons with England and our family of Local Authorities (most recent national data available): Bath and North East Somerset performance for 2011/12: targets for 2012/13 and our actual performance at the end of each quarter (colour coded to indicate current status of performance to target – Red/Amber/Green).

**Note:** There are no England or Family Comparators for locally set performance indicators.